



George Washington & Jefferson National Forests
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOREST SERVICE CONDUCTS PRESCRIBED FIRES IN SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA

BLACKSBURG, VA –The USDA Forest Service plans to treat portions of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests with prescribed fires during the late winter and spring of 2012. The exact dates of the treatments will be weather dependent, but will occur between early March and May 31. With a commitment to human safety serving as the number one priority, the purpose of the prescribed burns will be to improve wildlife habitat, promote a healthy forest ecosystem, and reduce wildfire risk.

The following prescribed fires on the Eastern Divide Ranger District are planned:

Montgomery County:	980 acres in the Upper Craig Creek area near Caldwell Fields
	55 acres on wildlife opening on Craig Creek
Bland/Giles Counties:	4400 acres in the No Business area
	70 acres in the Gold Bond area

Prescribed burns will only be ignited if wind speed and direction, temperature and humidity lie within prescribed parameters that optimize firefighter's ability to control the fire. Fire Management Officers ensure firefighters are well trained, equipped, and prepared to perform effectively and safely. Firefighters will use handheld drip torches as well as aerial ignition by helicopter to ignite the burn. Weather conditions should disperse smoke rapidly, but residents of surrounding areas may see and smell light smoke, especially in the mornings and evenings.

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are dependent on fire to remain healthy and to provide optimal habitat for a diversity of plants and animals. Species such as white-tailed deer, black bears, squirrels, and eastern cottontails benefit from a healthy forest habitat that flourishes in the wake of a prescribed fire. Without understory fires, oak and pine seedlings are outcompeted for available light and food by more shade-loving species, like red maple and white pine. Without fire, a yellow pine or oak-hickory forest will become a different forest over time—one dominated by maples, white pines, and other species that do not provide the quality of habitat on which many wildlife species depend.

For more information, please contact the Eastern Divide Ranger District at 540-552-4641.

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The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.